

CITY OF BELMONT

PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION MINUTES

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2007, 7:00 PM

Chair Parsons called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at One Twin Pines Lane, City Hall Council Chambers.

1. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Parsons, Frautschi, Horton, Mayer, McKenzie, Mercer, Wozniak
Commissioners Absent: None

Staff Present: Community Development Director de Melo (CDD), Senior Planner DiDonato (SP), Associate Planner Walker (AP), City Attorney Zafferano (CA), Recording Secretary Flores (RS)

2. AGENDA AMENDMENTS - None

3. COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments) - None

4. CONSENT CALENDAR

4A. MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 18, 2007

RS Flores noted a correction on page 11, changing Commissioner Mercer's comment from "...it still will make that structure integrated with the house" to "it still will not make that structure integrated with the house."

On page 7, Chair Parsons asked that the word "it" be corrected to "is" in the third bullet point under his comments.

MOTION: By Vice Chair Frautschi, seconded by Commissioner Horton, to accept the Minutes of September 18, 2007, with the changes noted to pages 7 and 11.

Ayes: Frautschi, Horton, Mayer, McKenzie, Mercer, Wozniak, Parsons
Noes: None

Motion passed 7/0

5. OLD BUSINESS

5A. Request for Extension of Approval – 600 Clipper Drive

AP Walker summarized the staff memorandum, concluding that granting the extension to 8/15/08 was warranted and that the findings can be made in the affirmative. Responding to Vice Chair Frautschi's question as to whether the expansion at the Mercedes dealership would have an effect on this property or the immediate area, AP Walker stated that the roadway improvements have mitigated traffic and the previous EIR looked at all future development of that area, so that any potential traffic impacts would be very minimal.

MOTION: By Commissioner McKenzie, seconded by Commissioner Frautschi, to adopt the Resolution approving an extension of a Conditional Use Permit and Design Review for 600 Clipper Drive (Appl. No. 2006-0065) with the attached Exhibit A, Conditions of Approval.

Ayes: McKenzie, Frautschi, Horton, Mayer, Mercer, Wozniak, Parsons
Noes: None

Motion passed 7/0

5B. Final Landscape Plan – 525 Kingston Drive

AP Walker summarized the staff memorandum, and answered questions from the Commission.

Commissioner Mayer commented that Kingston is at times referred to as a road, drive or street. AP Walker agreed to clean that up on the Resolution.

Chair Parsons suggested that if the Commission is going to require that a tree be added, it be put on the other side of the driveway because the drain system needs to be there. He added that he has seen better landscape plans and that the applicant should consider not planting shrubs that are going to be carried away by the deer. AP Walker suggested that they could utilize a condition requiring replacement in kind or maintenance of the landscaping.

Commissioner Mercer made the following points:

- Disappointed that they are proposing so much lawn in light of continuing water shortages.
- The proposed grass walkway through a tan bark area should be reconsidered.
- The lower portion of the lot could be restored to native.
- There needs to be a tree in the front on the right-hand side of the garage.
- Would like to see some of the more ornamental things replaced with native plants and the addition of one or more taller crowning trees.
- Was confused about why the walkway between the house and the garage needed to be paved on both top and lower levels, and would like to see some foundation plantings at the house level.
- They did not need to walk on both the top and bottom of the retaining wall, and suggested leaving open the one going in and out of the garage.
- Lacks an irrigation plan.

Commissioner McKenzie felt there was still too much hardscape in the way of all the interlocking pavers on both side of the existing house, suggesting more crushed granite or plantings to take their place. He felt that the plan lacks a lot of detail and definition and that the Commission should expect a more professional landscaping plan from an applicant.

Vice Chair Frautschi concurred with Commissioners Mercer and McKenzie, adding the following comments:

- Liked the idea of a tree to the right of the driveway, but then would need to switch the Portuguese Laurel to the other side because they can get to be 20-25' tall and could be a conflict.
- Needs to be at least a 1/3 reduction in the lawn area. Suggested getting rid of the total lawn area on the upper left, and then adding a tree or something else.
- Wasting money on Roses and Agapanthus.
- #2's they have lined up need to be replaced with some other type of plant materials.
- Concurred that there needs to be elimination of the hardscape next to the house foundation and there needs to be foundation plantings.
- Need to get rid of the little finger of grass area beside the garage and replace it with either bark or some other type of plants.
- Return with an irrigation plan.

Commissioner Horton agreed, and felt that the submittal was some kind of a colored pencil drawing over the top of the existing plan in an attempt to get it passed. She felt the plan was illogical or nonsensical.

Commissioner Wozniak agreed with what had been said, adding that there are deer on the top and gophers underneath and this big lawn could be just a disaster waiting to happen. She was also disappointed that most of the plantings with the exception of the Laurels are very low ground covers or shrubs so that there's not much of a difference between low and high and it doesn't look interesting; she suggested that they add some tall or at least medium sized trees in the back.

Commissioner Mayer stated that he had not been involved with this project, but felt that all previous comments seemed appropriate.

Chair Parsons felt it would do the applicant well to hire a professional to come in with a landscape plan that makes sense and would satisfy their needs and the Commission's, and make for a more attractive home. A landscape architect would propose more appropriate plant materials and help with some of the circulation problems and excess lawn and paved areas.

MOTION: By Vice Chair Frautschi, seconded by Commissioner Wozniak, approving a continuation to date uncertain for a Final Landscape Plan for 525 Kingston Street (Appl. No. 2005-0051).

Ayes: Frautschi, Wozniak, Horton, Mercer, McKenzie, Parsons

Noes: None

Abstain: Mayer

Motion passed 6/0/1

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS

6A. PUBLIC HEARING – 2703 PONCE AVENUE

To consider a Single Family Design Review for a 962-square-foot addition to an existing 1,939-square-foot single-story residence, resulting in a total of 2,901 square feet, which is below the maximum permitted 2,932 square feet for this site.

Appl. No. 2007-0023; APN 044-231-060; Zoned: R-1B (Single Family Residential)

CEQA Status: Categorical Exemption per Section 15301

Applicant: Gabor Kubisch

Owner(s): Gabor and Shelly Kubisch

Project Planner: Leslie Hopper (650) 522-2519

CDD de Melo summarized the staff report, recommending approval. He stated that the Conditions of Approval will be edited by staff in order to correct the numbering and other typographical errors. He answered questions from the Commission, noting that landscaping is discussed in the first page of the report, the fence will remain and the existing fireplace will be removed.

Vice Chair Frautschi asked CDD de Melo to address Ms. Ye's concerns about public view from Reed Avenue. CDD de Melo replied that he and the Project Planner performed multiple inspections by walking and driving along Reed Avenue to look for public view loss. They saw views of trees and of the sky but not a ridgeline or a view of the Bay. He confirmed that the current Single-Family Design Review findings do not address private view loss, and in staff's opinion, there is not a public view loss associated with the project.

Responding to Commissioner Mercer's question, Gabor Kubisch, applicant/owner, stated that the patio in the center is concrete and has drainage in the center.

Chair Parsons opened the public hearing. No one came forward to speak.

MOTION BY: Commissioner Wozniak, seconded by Commissioner Mayer, to close the Public Hearing. Motion passed 7/0 by a show of hands.

Commissioner Mayer felt that the landscape plan needs to include removal of the small tree that is too close to the Redwood tree, the fence on the east side should be repaired or replaced, and suggested irrigation on the side area.

Commissioner Wozniak felt that the new design is a big improvement.

Commissioner Horton also liked the new design. She would like to see the shingles go all the way around and the ivy pulled off the existing tree in the front yard before it kills it.

Vice Chair Frautschi had the following suggestions to make:

- There are too many doors at the front entryway. Recommended that the door coming from the garage side

be eliminated and that a slider be used onto the patio from the foyer.

- The family room addition over the garage will look bulky from the east. He suggested removal of the balcony at the back and shifting the family room back into the area where that balcony is. That shift would reduce the bulk in the front and probably reduce construction costs.
- The front view of the house is asymmetrical. The door could be shifted to the left so that they could incorporate a full post on the right to make it look more balanced.
- He concurred that there is no loss of public views.
- Mechanisms like exceptions and variances are last resort solutions.

Commissioner McKenzie concurred that moving the family room back would be a good change from a bulkiness standpoint, and added that the fence could use a new coat of stain.

Commissioner Mercer could not make the finding that the front garage stepping forward with a full flat face it is not excessive bulk. Sliding the room back a few feet with a sloped roof the same pitch as the front entry would significantly reduce the bulk of the house. She was concerned that the courtyard in the center of a one-story house will become something like a black well in the center of a two-story house. She felt that there is a significant amount of hardscape with the patio being totally concrete, but that the center patio could be lightened up to provide some permeable surfaces and improved drainage. She also wanted an additional condition that the existing landscape be photo documented and restored after construction.

Chair Parsons concurred with everything that had been said.

CDD de Melo stated that he would need to confer with the applicant, and suggested a continuance of the project to allow for a redesign of the front façade to address the concerns related to bulk and the other issues raised by Commissioners.

MOTION BY: Vice Chair Frautschi, seconded by Commissioner Horton, to continue to a date uncertain the Single-Family Design Review at 2703 Ponce Avenue (Appl. No. 2007-0023), with Exhibit A and the noted changes to the façade garage/family room setback to reduce bulk.

Ayes: Frautschi, Horton, Mayer, McKenzie, Mercer Wozniak, Parsons
Noes: None

Motion passed 7/0

6B. PUBLIC HEARING – 1000 SOUTH ROAD/950 HOLLY ROAD
Continued to date uncertain without discussion.

7. NEW BUSINESS

7A. Preliminary Design Review – 2156 Carlmont Drive
SP DiDonato summarized the staff memorandum, and answered questions from the Commission. He asked that, if the Commission chooses to comment, they direct their comments to the four questions raised in the memorandum related to 1) appropriateness for the site, 2) intensity, 3) distribution of proposed land, and 4) compatibility with the site and surrounding area.

Moshe Dinar architect for the project, presented background information and visuals of the proposal. He noted that in order to build the quality architecture proposed, the square footage and fourth unit is critical and makes the difference between the project being financially feasible. He added that even though they plan to take out condo papers and officially it will be architecture for sale, in reality the owner's intention is not to sell them but to rent them for a very long time.

Commissioners commented as follows:

Vice Chair Frautschi:

- Had no problems with the first and fourth questions raised by staff, but had questions regarding the second and third.
- Liked the lighting fixtures, doors, windows, and color palette.

- Concerned that too much of what is visible from the front of the building is hardscape. As viewed from Carlmont Drive, the plan emphasizes garages, sidewalks and driveways instead of the building architecture and the landscape areas.
- The current design does not take full advantage of the views the lot has to the east; the views are on Carlmont Drive.
- When there is a property where the garage, driveway and setback standards are not within what the Commission wants to see, it tells him that either they have to shift the buildings around a bit, reduce the size of at least one of the units or something has to happen. Mechanisms like exceptions and variances are last resorts. There are a number of options—reduce the number of units or even the size of one of the units in order to make it fit in the space.
- First and foremost, they should relocate the garages behind, under or at the side of the building and pull the building forward on the lot. He recommended perhaps a planned development because the Commission sets the rules and what they are trying to achieve is the best product for the lot, for the applicant and for the City.
- Relocating the garages would eliminate the dark recessed entry porch foyer situation.
- Important to the Commission and the City on this site is that they are saving the Bay and Oak trees at the front center of the property. He had no problem with the Acacia trees going, but felt that with just a little change, even shifting the powder room in some of the units, the huge Oak could also be saved.
- Found the stacked washer/dryer acceptable but felt there were a few lost opportunities in the design for storage areas, particularly the stacked dryer areas in the B units.
- Final plans for any building of this nature would have to include space for garbage and recycling storage.
- Hoped they keep pursuing this project, and felt that they are off to a very good start.

Commissioner McKenzie:

- Land use is appropriate for the site.
- Architecture is compatible, nice looking project and complementary to the surrounding area.
- The setback issue needs to be resolved but he would be willing to help or introduce some kind of compromise if it would make the financing work for the project.
- Believes the buildings should be moved closer to the street to improve the setback issue in the back.
- Did not believe there is space for parking in the back of the buildings, and underground parking would probably not be economically feasible. Suggested that perhaps there are some compromises that could be made on the setback because the physical changes look pretty difficult.
- The garages seem to be undersized; would really only hold one full size car and one compact car. They should allow for two full size cars.
- No problem with the stacked laundry areas.
- Very attractive project that would be a real attribute on that street.

Commissioner Mercer:

- Complimented architect for making a nice articulated façade.
- Concerned about introducing four very short driveways backing onto a heavily traveled street on a blind curve and slope.
- Concerned about the potential need for fill since it looked to her that, in order to get the kind of perspective shown in the elevations, the garages would have fill underneath them, or the garages would actually be at the bottom of a sloped down driveway. She would not want to see fill imported because it would be backing up very close to other properties on the two back sides.
- Concerned that the garages are not large enough for two cars.
- Driveways not quite long enough; cars would be parked right up next to sidewalk.
- Liked the glass front doors, but for privacy would want them oriented differently or a different door.
- The land use is appropriate, or light if anything. Could do smaller units for more families.
- Concerned with the arrangement; four driveways and four garages equals excessive hardscape.

Commissioner Mayer:

- Thanked the developer for the project and hoped they can go forward with whatever changes they all agree are necessary.
- Concerned with garages and setback; everything possible needs to be done to turn them into conforming spaces.
- The positioning of the two units together is awkward; looks nice from the front but two homes will be looking in on each other.

Commissioner Wozniak:

- Liked the way it looks and pleased that it is not an apartment house.

- Concerned about the outdoor areas; not sure if they would be common or somehow divided.
- Would like to see the setbacks conform.
- Suggested they consider raising the height of one or more of the units in order to get the amount of needed square footage in the last unit. That might also allow them to get the conforming garages and do something about the driveway and off-street uncovered parking.

Commissioner Horton:

- The land use is appropriate for the site.
- Agreed that the garages are too short and too narrow; not large enough not only for cars but also for trash and recycling containers and could end up with unsightly things outdoors.
- Driveways are too short.
- Considered that the 6' setback could be interpreted as the side rather than the back. Thought they could come to some resolution with that.
- No objection to stacked laundry area, but added that if the owner ever decides to sell, larger storage and laundry areas would make it more likely that she could get her asking price.
- She believed the architecture is an improvement over that of the surrounding area.

Chair Parsons:

- Thanked the applicant for bringing the project forward.
- Lack of parking on the street is a safety issue, with cars coming around the corner very fast. Double car garages that do not fit two cars and sidewalks that come out eliminates a lot of parking that is currently needed and would be needed even more with the introduction of these units.
- Liked the detailing.
- Concerned about the issue of grading; the lot drops at least 10' from the upper corner down to the back.
- Suggested that there should be a way to make an arrangement where there could be a driveway at the lower end of the property that turned and came under the units at the back. This would allow for landscaping in the front and perhaps adequate spaces for the driveways. Also suggested the possibility of putting the garages under the house, so that a couple of the units would be 3 levels.
- They need to save the trees.
- The site needs to be reworked with the idea that they have a sloping site rather than a flat site.
- Could not approve a project that has non-conforming garages and does not solve the parking problem.
- Suggested that the possibility of a planned development be discussed with the Planning staff.

8. REPORTS, STUDIES AND UPDATES

CDD de Melo reported as follows:

A. NDNU (Koret) Athletic Field

The fourth meeting of the NDNU Athletic Field Task Force was scheduled for the following Thursday.

B. U-Haul – 530 El Camino Real

Definite improvements have been made to the north and south sides of the building, including installation of irrigation and pruning of ivy and dead branches.

C. Motel 6 – 1101 Shoreway Road

No significant update. Applicant continues to enforce their security plan efforts and the Police Department is getting regular updates. He had received no alerts to any issues in the last two weeks.

D. 665 South Road

Clarified that the subject address was the subject of a building permit that was issued on August 9, 2007 and includes a roughly 260 sq.ft. addition in two pieces – about 130 sq.ft. for widening and expansion of the garage and 120 sq.ft. to improve the front entry area. There have been 11 inspections on the project, nothing looks out of the ordinary and all permits are in play.

Commissioner McKenzie stated that he does not have a problem with the project but was concerned that the extensive scope of the remodel did not trigger any variance, design review, landscaping plan or neighborhood outreach, and did not come to the Planning Commission. He understood that there is less than 400 sq.ft. of additional space, but the property was gutted, except for the skeleton of stud walls and structure, and the front yard was filled with containers for storing materials, the interior walls were removed, rooms were rearranged, front entrance was extended, streetscape design is completely changed

and it will not look much like it did before. He questioned if the 400' trigger is sufficient for this type of remodel project because this house now looks like its sitting right on the street, who reviewed the design of the architectural frontage of the house, who has looked at the landscaping and could it have triggered any kind of a parking issue. He was concerned that if the Planning Commission has no input to an extensive remodel of this magnitude how can they be assured of consistency and quality of future remodels in the community. He questioned if the 400' trigger is exactly what is needed, or are there some other triggers that might be needed to protect how the house is going to look from the street and what it is going to do to the neighborhood.

Responding to Chair Parsons' question, CDD de Melo stated that it is not the practice of the City to e-mail the Commission on every building permit that is issued for every project, adding that this was not an Administrative Design Review - it was a ministerial action, a building permit for 260 square feet. Discussion ensued, with the conclusion that forthcoming development of a residential design guidelines booklet that can be given to residents may help to solve the problem. This item is part of the Community Development Department's Priority Calendar work and further discussion of this issue was postponed until that is completed. The address under discussion will be removed from the Reports, Studies and Updates discussion list.

CDD de Melo Carlos reminded the Commission that the next Planning Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 7th and there will not be a meeting on January 1, 2008. He also reminded them of the Owner/Building Workshop scheduled for the following Thursday evening.

9. CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF TUESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2007

Liaison: Commissioner McKenzie
Alternate Liaison: Commissioner Mercer

10. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m. to a Regular Planning Commission Meeting on Wednesday, November 7, 2007, at 7:00 p.m. in Belmont City Hall.

Carlos de Melo
Planning Commission Secretary

CD's of Planning Commission Meetings are available in the
Community Development Department.
Please call (650) 595-7416 to schedule an appointment.